

it was extensively produced under the Ming and the Ch'ing, The lacquer of China is prepared from the sap of a particular kind of native tree. The sap is collected from incisions, darkens with exposure to the air, is strained, and then is ground to improve its grain and to give it uniform consistency. It is colored by mixing it with various substances. For instance, a red frequently seen is obtained through cinnabar.

Lacquer is applied with spatula and brush to the article to be decorated. Several and sometimes many layers are spread, each being allowed to dry before the next is put on. The base to be covered may be wood, metal, porcelain, or even cloth. The objects generally need special preparation for the lacquer, and the entire process, if well carried out, requires great skill. Succeeding layers may be of varying composition, consistency, and color, and the drying and polishing demand experience and care. The surface may be decorated in a number of ways, and the designs may be very elaborate—landscapes, groups of figures, mythological and religious incidents or symbols, or flowers and trees. The surface may be painted, often with gold or silver gilt; it may have the pattern placed on it in relief; it may be inlaid with mother of pearl or semi-precious stones; or it may be carved, sometimes very deeply. For carved objects layers of different colors may be applied, and the carving done in such a manner as to bring out the colors. Or the lacquer may be mixed with fine particles of gold and the polished surface left with no other ornamentation. Many different objects have been lacquered—boxes, screens, fans, trays, ewers, vases, chairs and thrones, and even the pillars of buildings, large as well as small.

There have, too, been many different centers of

manufacture.
Often each has been noted for a particular kind of
workmanship
and type of decoration. In recent years Canton,
Foochow, and
Peiping have been prominent.

ENAMELS

The art of applying enamels appears to have
been of non-
Chinese origin. It may have come in both by the sea
and by the
overland routes. Certainly we do not hear of it
much if at all
before the Yuan. Beautiful enameled ware was
produced under
the Ming and the great Ch'ing Emperors of the
seventeenth and